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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 000615

SIPDIS

HQ SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
COMMERCE FOR 4332/MAC/WH/JLAO  
TREASURY FOR RJARPE  
NSC FOR RKING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/16/2019

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KHLS, PTER, SNAR, VE

SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN AIRLINE WITH POSSIBLE DRUG TIES TO FLY  
TO U.S.?

REF: A. CARACAS 407

[1](#)B. 2008 CARACAS 1702

Classified By: A/Economic Counselor Richard T. Yoneoka for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) ACTION REQUEST: Post requests information on whether  
or not Venezuelan carrier Aeropostal is cleared to commence  
flights to the United States and any information, derogatory  
or otherwise, on U.S.-based company Aircraft Parts and  
Pieces, Inc.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: President of Venezuelan airline Aeropostal,  
Dr. Mustafa Flores, told Econoff May 13 that Aeropostal has  
all the required U.S. and Venezuelan permits to begin flights  
to the United States as early as June 2009. Flores claims  
the Venezuelan government has mended fences with the Makled  
family, the owners of Aeropostal, after the government seized  
the airline in November 2008 due to the arrest of two Makled  
family members on drug charges. Flores is now working with a  
second company of unclear ownership to begin U.S.-based  
charter flights to various points in Latin America. END  
SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (C) Flores reported that although Aeropostal, owned by the  
Makled family, was "preventatively seized" after two members  
of the family were arrested on drug trafficking charges in  
November 2008 (Refs A and B), the Makled family and the  
Venezuelan government are now working hand in hand to run  
Aeropostal. Makled appointed managers, in conjunction with a  
government-established "temporary administration board,"  
jointly operate the airline. He added that in spite of the  
on-going Makled family criminal investigation, the airline  
has recently found financial success, so much so that  
Aeropostal has leased a new aircraft. Flores claimed that  
while on paper he is still the president of Aeropostal, he  
has not gone to the office in four months, as he no longer  
wants to be publicly associated with the Makleds.

[1](#)4. (C) Flores has instead started working with a company  
called Aircraft Parts and Pieces (APP), Inc., located in  
Miami, where he has laid the ground work for charter flight  
operations originating in Miami and New York. He said the  
charter flights may commence as early as the end of May 2009  
with a route from Miami to Santo Domingo, Santo Domingo to

Caracas, and a route from Miami to Lima. Flores was very vague about who actually owns APP and would only say that while the company started off as part of Venezuelan carrier Aeropostal, it separated, moved to the U.S., and started selling aircraft parts in early 2008. In addition to its parts business, APP is now seeking to begin operating charter flights as noted above.

15. (C) INS approved Aircraft Parts and Pieces, Inc. petition on behalf of Flores for an L1A Nonimmigrant Worker Visa on March 5, 2009. On the petition Flores' name appears as Jose Manuel Mustafa. Post has not issued the L1A visa in part because the company, APP, has so far failed to provide adequate documentation supporting the petition.

16. (C) As per paragraph one, Post requests information on whether or not Aeropostal is cleared to fly to the United States, and additional information on U.S.-based company Aircraft Parts and Pieces, Inc.

COMMENT:

17. (C) If Flores' claims are true, then Aeropostal is prospering under the joint administration of the Makled family and Venezuelan government while all other domestic airlines are nearing bankruptcy (septel). This situation raises questions about the current nature of the relationship between the government and the Makled family. Additionally, the ties between Flores and the Makleds may be closer than Flores would like to admit and warrant scrutiny before visa issuance, as does the ownership structure of the company Aircraft Parts and Pieces, Inc., which was originally part of

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Makled-owned Aeropostal.

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